

Alaska State Legislature

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Rep. Gary Stevens, Co-Chair
Rep. Peggy Wilson, Co-Chair
Rep. John Coghill Jr.
Rep. Fred Dyson
Rep. Drew Scalzi
Rep. Mary Kapsner
Rep. Beth Kerttula

State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska
99801-1182
(907) 465-4925 or
465-3824
Fax (907) 465-3517

Special Committee on Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 12, 2002

CONTACT: Rep. Gary Stevens (907) 465-4925
Rep. Peggy Wilson (907) 465-3824

House Calls on B.C. to Rein In Fish Farming HJR 46 Cites Threat to Wild Salmon, Seeks Moratorium Extension

(JUNEAU) – Saying that British Columbia’s fish farming industry poses significant threats to Alaska’s wild salmon stocks and marine environment, the House today passed a resolution calling on its Canadian neighbor to reinstate its seven-year moratorium on expanding its finfish mariculture industry.

Sponsored by the House Special Committee on Fisheries, HJR 46 represents Alaska’s efforts to draw attention to the known hazards that raising farmed Atlantic salmon pose to the natural fish stocks that are a foundation of the state’s economy and culture.

“Fishing is the economic lifeblood of Southeastern Alaska, and our largest private-sector employer statewide,” said Rep. Peggy Wilson (R-Wrangell), co-chair of the Fisheries Committee. “Fish farms have the potential to wipe out our wild salmon fisheries, and we need to do everything we can to point out the danger.”

Early fears that raising Atlantic salmon in pens in coastal Pacific waters could decimate wild stocks are coming true, the resolution says. Fish escaping from their pens compete with wild fish for food, displace them from their habitat, spawn in wild streams and carry disease and parasites against which wild fish have no resistance.

“In 2001, there were 29,000 accidental releases of farmed fish and escaped farmed fish have been caught by Alaska fishermen as far west as the Bering Sea, and as close as my next door neighbor,” Wilson said. “Escaped salmon from B.C. fish farms are now found in approximately 80 streams on the West Coast.”

Rep. Fred Dyson (R-Eagle River), a member of the Fisheries Committee, said, “Every horror story that the opponents of finfish farming said would come true, has come true.” He said even B.C. government officials admitted to him that the industry had made every mistake possible, despite assurances that fish would never escape, never survive in open waters and never spawn in wild streams.

The resolution asks British Columbia’s government to renew its recently expired moratorium on Atlantic salmon fish farming in waters adjacent to Alaska. It also encourages the U.S. federal government to factor in the damage of such salmon to Alaska when negotiating fisheries treaties or other trade agreements with Canada. [HJR 46](#) moves next to the Senate for consideration.

###

Broadcasters note: Comments are available on the Majority Actuality Line 1-800-478-6540,
or on the Majority webpage at www.akrepublicans.org